



Cornell University

John S. Knight Institute for Writing in the Disciplines

Document Title: Holidays and Social Rivalry Sequence

Author: Donna Truglio

Course: History 100

Course Title: Revelry, Rivalry, and Consumption: Nineteenth-Century American Holidays and Civic Life

Year of Award: Fall 2000

Copyright Statement:

This material is copyrighted by the author and made available through the Cornell University eCommons Digital Repository under a Creative Commons Attribution, Non-Commercial License.

This document is part of the John S. Knight Writing in the Disciplines First-year Writing Seminar Program collection in Cornell's eCommons Digital Repository.

<http://ecommons.library.cornell.edu/handle/1813/10813>.

winner

➡ Fall 2000 John S. Knight Assignment Sequence Prize

We are pleased to invite applications for the Fall 2000 John S. Knight Assignment Sequence Prize. This prize of \$400 will be awarded to the teacher submitting the best sequence of writing assignments for a First-Year Writing Seminar.

Assignment sequences in a writing course are built around a series of essay topics (probably for a portion of the course). Submissions should include a rationale and a description of your plans for eliciting and responding to student drafts and revisions, as well as a description of how you ready students for each essay assignment, for example by engaging them in preparatory writing exercises, including informal writing designed to help students understand the material on which they subsequently write formal essays. Reflections on what worked well, and why, and what you would change another time, are welcome.

Submissions are due in 159 Goldwin Smith by **Friday, December 15**. No exceptions can be made. The winner will be announced to the Cornell community, and copies of the winning assignment sequence will be made available to all interested staff.

➡ Fall 2000 John S. Knight Assignment Sequence Prize Application

Instructor's name Donna Truglio

Department History Course title Revelry, Rivalry, and Consumption:
Nineteenth-Century Holidays and
Civic Life.

Should I win a prize, I give the John S. Knight Institute permission to publish, quote from, and/or distribute copies of my essay, and to distribute publicity to newspapers and other publications, local and/or national, about my winning the prize.

Holidays and Social Rivalry Sequence
title of assignment sequence

Instructor's signature

Date

Donna Truglio
12/13/00

Donna Truglio

History 100.15

"Revelry, Rivalry, and Consumption: Nineteenth-Century Holidays and Civic Life."

Fall 2000 John S. Knight Assignment Sequence Prize Application

In my seminar, "Revelry, Rivalry, and Consumption: Nineteenth-Century American Holidays and Civic Life," I wanted my students to consider the different and changing political and social meanings and uses of holidays in America from the 1780s to the 1890s. My goal was to marry this historical content with a teaching of writing which did more than just focus on the improvement of basic writing skills. Instead, I hoped to mobilize the disciplinary content of my course in a way that allowed for an exploration of the importance of writing as a means of expressing ideas and for an understanding of writing as an equal partner to reading in the educational process. Central to my planning for this goal was the assignment sequence. Attached to this introduction is a copy of the third, fourth, and fifth writing assignments I gave to my class in the Fall 2000 semester. Following each essay assignment is a description of the preparatory work done by the students. My rationale for each essay is also included, as it originally appeared with each assignment received by the students.

In my organization of the course as a whole, the first way I planned to help my students understand the social and political meanings and uses of holidays in nineteenth-century America was through the readings I assigned them. I exposed them to a combination of primary materials, from which they would analyze these meanings, and secondary materials, from which they would assess the validity of particular historical arguments. I also assisted them in these processes by allowing enough time for discussion of the readings each week in class and by providing study questions to guide them. The study questions were well received, helping to stimulate discussion, especially

in the first few weeks of class. By the middle of the semester we began to rely less heavily on my questions, as the students took up the discussions more spontaneously on their own. Overall, this combination of reading, analyzing, and discussing encouraged them to approach the material with an eye for both the details and the context that made the holidays we studied unique in the last century. I have attached samples of the study questions I used in this sequence of assignments below.

Our work with the readings each week tied directly to the writing assignments. In these essays I wanted to encourage my students to flesh out the deeper social and political meanings of the particular holiday for the particular time period on which we were focusing. As mentioned above, they had the benefit of our class discussions, guided by the study questions, as they prepared their written work. For each essay I also included a different additional in-class activity, ranging from an exercise on language and meaning to a workshop on the proper use of citations (see below in the sequence attachment). In the future I think I will also make outlines mandatory, especially for the more complex assignment #4. I realized after teaching this semester, and not requiring the submission of outlines, that many students skipped this important step.

Over the full semester I required my students to compose six essays ranging across four styles of composition. In the first two writing assignments I asked them to "take a position" on the general purpose of holidays in the 1780s and on the partisan nature of George Washington's Birthday in 1810. This initial sequence was designed as a "warm up" in the beginning of term to get the students into writing and thinking about writing after the long summer break. The third, fourth, and fifth essay assignments, submitted below, formed the second and central sequence of the course. I have titled the

sequence "Holidays and Social Rivalry" due its overarching historical theme of contestation. In the third and fourth essays I asked the students to compose a more traditional historical "explanatory narrative" from a wider range of sources about St. Patrick's Day and Independence Day. In the fifth essay, I required them to "apply or test a theory" about the characteristics of Thanksgiving in the mid-nineteenth century. In the sixth and final essay I had them "contextualize" the event of Christmas as experienced by both the middle- and the working-class in the nineteenth century. My hope was that by exposing them to these different ways of writing they would become more conscious of both the variety of ways that they could chose to express their ideas in writing and the different types of essays that may be required of them in future courses.

The "Holidays and Social Rivalry" sequence submitted below was well received by my students. I found that many of them liked my including the rationale for each assignment on the assignment handout ("why this assignment"). Several students told me that by having this explanation they could not only understand better what was expected of them in the given essay, but also follow how each assignment related to the next one and where the course was "going" as a whole. I noticed that by the end of the semester many of my students were able to discuss and write about broader trends and themes, which we had explored throughout the course in these sequences, in a way I do not think they would have been able to pull together had they only experienced the class in individual, segmented essay assignments. I have attached below the central sequence of essay assignments #3, #4, and #5, entitled "**Holidays and Social Rivalry.**"

a) Writing assignment #3

Basic requirements:

- 3 double-spaced, typed pages
- 1 inch margins
- number the pages
- essay #3, your essay title, your name, class, date on a SEPARATE COVER PAGE

The assignment:

In the 1980s and 1990s St. Patrick's Day became associated with the heated controversy over the exclusion of homosexuals from the traditional parade sponsored by the Ancient Order of Hibernians in New York City. In the 1840s and 1850s the controversial issues were very different. In a three-page essay address the following question: what were the main reasons why many native-born American citizens were hostile to parades held by Irish immigrants for St. Patrick's Day?

Base your analysis on the readings on St. Patrick's Day in the reading packet and handouts, paying particular attention to the editorial from the Irish American. You may find more than one reason for opposition to the St. Patrick's Day celebrations. Be sure to weigh out which you think were the most significant and why given the historical context. You want to develop a case for why you think the reasons you have chosen are the most important. Make your case in a well-organized essay. Do not merely list possibilities from the readings.

A HELPFUL HINT: Pay attention to the *language* used in the readings. By locating and interpreting the motivation behind the common negative terms and metaphors used by native-born Americans to describe and refer to the Irish in the nineteenth-century you will be able to pin-point more easily what were their main objections to the St. Patrick's Day parades. This use of language should be one of your main pieces of evidence as you "make your thesis."

b) The preparatory work for this assignment will include:

- readings taken from primary and secondary sources
- study questions on the readings, distributed in class on the day of discussion to facilitate that discussion. Students break into small groups to work on their responses and then the small groups open up for a general discussion.
- class-room exercise on language and meaning based on one of the core primary documents.
- a draft of the essay will be required. I will make comments on it but will not place a letter grade.

c) My rationale

"Why this assignment? You have already worked on two papers in this class. In those papers you were asked to "take a position" on an issue, first in a standard scholarly style, and then in a more creative editorial piece. HERE you are expected to write an "explanatory narrative." You have read about two holidays in early America

(Independence Day and George Washington's birthday) and how they have functioned in that society. In both primary documents (letters, diaries, memoirs) and secondary documents (excerpts from historical monographs) you have learned about the relationship between holidays and national identity and between holidays and partisan politics. You have debated these connections in class discussion and in your written work. NOW I want you to think about the relationship between the St. Patrick's Day holiday and ethnic identity. This not only will enable you to better understand the history of this event, but also will help you think about how ethnicity, as an analytical category, has functioned in history. You will develop this important analytical tool which you will be asked to implement later on in the course."

a) Writing assignment #4

Basic requirements:

- 3, double-spaced, typed pages
- 1 inch margins
- number the pages
- use basic footnotes as taught in class
- name, essay #4, your essay title, class, date on a SEPARATE COVER PAGE

The assignment:

In the next few weeks our readings and class discussions will focus on the issues of race, class, and gender in nineteenth-century America. We will consider in general terms the experiences of African-Americans, the working class, and women in the 1800s. More specifically we will focus on the different ways each of these groups participated in or used the celebration of national independence to highlight particular political or social concerns.

In a three-page essay address the following questions: How did African-Americans, the working class, or women (discuss one group only) feel about the Fourth of July in the mid-nineteenth century? How did they use both that holiday, and the assertion of equality made in the Declaration of Independence associated with it, to publicize their grievances and call for change? *Remember to discuss what those grievances were as you explain how your chosen group used the July 4th holiday and assertion of equality in the Declaration to publicize them and call for change.*

Break the assignment down step-by-step:

- Think about these questions first.
- Chose which group you would like to address: African-Americans, the working class, or women.
- Read over the relevant documents again carefully, marking useful passages for citation in you essay.
- Compose a hypothesis that addresses BOTH parts of the question so that your paper will be a coherent single argument.
- Draft an outline of your argument: what are your main points? What evidence from the documents do you want to use to support those points?
- Draft the essay according to the outline. Keep your focus.

- In your final version, be sure to cite your sources with proper footnotes as you will be taught in class.
- Read through the draft and make corrections. Is it clear and concise? Are there areas of repetition? Have you made a convincing argument? Have you supported all your points with evidence and cited that evidence correctly?

b) The preparatory work for this assignment:

- three units of reading (one for each group) that contains both primary and secondary materials.
- study questions for each unit distributed in class on the day of discussion. Small group prep and large group discussion of the questions.
- a writing workshop on the proper use of sources (when to use them) and proper citation methods (the "how to" or formatting issues).
- In future, I will collect the students' outlines to ensure they complete one.
- a draft will be submitted a week before the final version is due and will be returned with my comments, but without a grade. Students will have five days to revise their work.

c) My rationale:

"Why this assignment? In this assignment you are asked to compose another 'explanatory narrative.' Thus the format of the paper carries over from assignment #3. After having written a draft and final paper in this style, you should be more comfortable with it. In this new assignment you will be pushed further. In the last essay you had to address one question and you were able to draw from a narrow range of sources. Here you are asked to tackle a two-part question and to draw from a slightly wider range of sources. You will also be expected to cite your use of those sources in proper footnotes. This assignment not only will help you understand the content of this course, by having you engage with the material critically as you provide an explanatory narrative of it, but also will prepare you for the more complex scholarly tasks which await in the remaining essays in this course (and in other courses you may take during your college career)."

a) Writing assignment #5

Basic requirements:

- 4, double-spaced, typed pages
- 1 inch margins
- number the pages
- use proper footnotes as taught in class
- name, essay #5, your essay title, class, date on a **SEPARATE COVER PAGE**

The assignment:

Some historians have argued that those who pushed to make Thanksgiving a national holiday in the 1840s and 1850s and who popularized it later in the century really wanted to impose northern Yankee cultural traditions on the nation as whole. They argue that supporters of a national Thanksgiving wanted to define all of American culture as New England's culture. For evidence of these motives, these historians point to the

editorials written by Sarah Josepha Hale, that were published in *Godey's Lady's Book*, and to the popular images created by Winslow Homer, that were reproduced in *Harper's Weekly*. Other historians disagree. They draw a different conclusion from the same source material. These historians insist that Hale earnestly believed the holiday would help unite the nation in peace during the tumultuous years before the Civil War and that Homer was merely portraying popular images of the event that already had taken root across the country in the years after the war.

Now it is time for you to weigh in! In a four-page essay argue for the position you find more convincing and why. Be sure to discuss why you believe the argument you reject is less convincing. Base your analysis on your own reading of the same source materials the two groups of historians used (Hale editorials and Homer images). You can also draw from the other readings in the course on Thanksgiving, if you feel that will help you "make your thesis." You may decide that you do not find either position convincing. If so, be sure to argue why and to present the position you believe is most suitable based on the same source material.

b) The preparatory work for this assignment:

- readings from primary sources and on-line access to the Homer images via the Johnson Museum web-site.
- study questions distributed in class on the day of discussion. The usual format of small group and large group discussion will follow.
- in-class discussion of the Homer images
- 2 copies of the drafts will be due in class for in-class peer editing. One copy will be used in class (exchanged with a partner for in-class review and discussion). The second copy I will take home and write my comments on, as usual. They will then have both copies to take home to guide them through their revisions.
- final version due the next week in class

c) My rationale:

"Why this assignment? In the previous two essays you were asked to write an 'explanatory narrative.' You learned both the meaning of the categories of ethnicity, race, gender, and class for a specific period in the past and how to use these categories in your writing as analytical tools. Here you are asked to draw on that experience, as historians and as writers, and to consider the position of regional identity and culture in a paper in which you must 'test a theory' by 'taking a position' on the merits of that theory. In addition to this added level of complexity you have no secondary sources to guide you, but must work straight from the primary sources on the strength of your own analytical skills. The preparation you have had in developing those skills, (in the previous writing assignments and in the in-class discussions and activities for those assignments) as well as the feedback you have received from me and your classmates on your draft of this paper, should serve you well here."

Below I have attached samples of the study questions and in-class activities used in this sequence:

Study Questions for St. Patrick's Day holiday:

- According to Meagher what motive, (aside from "the desire to pay homage to St. Patrick"), explains why Worcester's Irish population celebrated St. Patrick's Day?
- What took place in the 1850s that pushed most of the city's Irish population to unite in defense of their ethnic identity and common Catholic faith?
- According to Meagher, deep divisions existed in the Irish community of Worcester that prevented a large-scale annual parade on St. Patrick's Day.
- Which group in the Irish community did NOT want to parade on March 17th and why?
- Which group did want to parade and why?
- Which group in this Irish community was caught in the middle of this division over the parade? Why?
- What led to the temporary revival of ethnic solidarity and aggressiveness in the 1890s?
- What kind of solidarity was promoted by the Columbus Day parades organized by the Knights of Columbus in the late 1890s?
- Look at the short article from the *New York Herald* for 1842. We have spent a lot of time considering the meaning of specific ritual actions in the past. Can you explain what the incident with the "stuffed Paddy" reveals about the nature of ethnic relations in New York City in the 1840s?

Classroom exercise #3

Irish American: Normative language, authorial position and meaning (reading attached below).

- Read over the letter by "A. Freeman" reprinted in the *Irish American* in March 1854 one more time.
 - a) Underline all the words and phrases used by the author of the letter to identify himself or the group(s) with which he associates himself.
 - b) Circle all the terms the author uses to identify the St. Patrick's Day celebration, the Irish, and the Catholics about which he complains.
 - c) How does "A. Freeman" identify himself through his choice of words in the letter? How does he identify the Irish?

- Now look at the language used by the editors of the *Irish American* in their response to "A. Freeman."
 - a) Underline the terms used to refer to the Irish and Catholics. (The "we" discussed here).
 - b) Circle all the terms used to refer to the Protestant native-born Americans who opposed the parade.
 - c) Do the editors of the *Irish American* use normative language in their response to "A. Freeman."?

- Consider how BOTH "A. Freeman" and the editors use normative language and authorial position to argue diametrically opposed positions.

From the Irish American

March 18, 1854

p.1

"St. Patrick's Day

(from the N.Y. Express of Wednesday March 8)

The following is one of several communications on the same subject, and much in the same spirit, which have reached us through the Post Office this day or two past -

To the Editors of the N.Y. Express.

Why should St. Patrick's day be celebrated in our city? As Americans we acknowledge no patron saint, whose bones should be rattled over our heads from the musty relics of popery and ignorance. It is an annoyance to our citizens, an injury to an honest class of laboring men, carmen and stage-drivers. On the last St. Patrick's day, the writer of this was detained about half an hour on the corner of Broadway and Chambers street, in a storm of rain and sleet waiting for the procession to pass across Broadway. There were stages, carts, backs, &c, all detained from the same cause, and angry words soon led to blows, and a carman was brutally beaten, for being unable to restrain his impatient horse from [entering] the line of march. Will this be submitted to under the present excited state of public feeling and jealousy of foreign interference and dictation? We think not, although we *Know Nothing* about it. We do not wish to be understood as unfriendly to the Irish, because we thus write: on the contrary, we think true friendship dictates such advice, as all these efforts to keep up this hostility of feeling between our American and adopted citizens results in greater irritation and more widely extended hatred of Pope's Nuncios and Kings. On American soil, we must be baptized with American principles, or we must give up our nationality. Yours truly,
A. Freeman.

We give this correspondence a hearing, for the reason that the seems to have a real practical grievance to complain of, namely, that he was detained half an hour in the street by a procession of Hibernians. The same inconvenience, it is presumed, would have resulted from an American procession, or Scotch procession, or an Italian procession, or a German procession. If the argument be good against the one, it is just as good against another. So that the only question apparently at issue is this,---ought public processions of any kind be tolerated in the public thoroughfares? We *say apparent*, for we see the real objection our correspondent has to the St. Patrick's demonstration, in his dislike of Roman Catholicism, and the apprehensions he has that, St. Patrick's Day being a *Saint's* day, the bayonets and swords which are carried in the Hibernian processions, are likely, by and by, unless checked now, to be converted into a regular standing army for the Church of Rome. Roman Catholics, however, may retort, that the celebration the various Protestant Societies had on Washington's Birth Day, was a demonstration against the Church of Rome, and as such ought to be disoutenanced hereafter by the municipal

authorities. A while ago, they complained of the Protestant street preachers, as crusaders against their particular form of religion, and contended that it was the duty of the police to put them down. But on examination, it was found that there was no law for any such procedure, and the street preachers accordingly went on, talking in vacant lots, to any body that would listen to them,---the Catholics meanwhile wisely keeping away. These gentlemen--the street preachers--then failed to attain to the honour of martyrdom, and thenceforth their harangues attracted little or no attention. Different results would have followed, had there been any violent straining of municipal law to put down these perripatic preachers by force.

Just as it is with the celebration of St. Patrick's Day; the Irish Societies have as good a right to parade the streets as any other Society or Societies here. The same law that protects the one must shield the other. People who do not like to witness the spectacle should stay away. Or if they do not like to see a *Saint's* day the occasion of a military display in our streets, the most sensible way is to go to work and agitate for the enactment of a law, restricting or prohibiting altogether the use of the public thoroughfares for any such exhibitions, no matter whether they are Protestant or Catholic. Sectarian demonstrations of any kind, in the streets, are always to be deprecated. They can only tend to disturbance, and as such, therefore, we should like to see them fall into disuse, as soon as possible. The members of the Hibernian Societies are said to be adopted citizens. So are the members of the Scottish, French, Italian, and German military companies that occasionally parade in the uniform of the land of their birth. So far as this goes, we see nothing to which we, as Americans, can particularly object. We would not obliterate, nor seek to obliterate, the love which any man may have for his native land. Indeed, that is a kind of love that can never be obliterated. Perhaps it is not desirable that it should be, for we may well doubt whether a man, who has not affection for the land that gave him birth, can have any for the country of his adoption. But there is this essential distinction between the St. Patrick Association and the other foreigners above mentioned: the parades of the Irish on such a day, to a certain extent, partake of a religious character: the latter have no such distinction. Hence the bitter feeling that seems to exist, by certain Protestants, towards military celebrations of St. Patrick's Day - a feeling which is not manifested towards celebrations of another kind, or by other foreigners."

Study Questions for July 4th and Race:

- **Douglass:**
- Why does Douglass dwell on how difficult it was for the patriots of 1776 to criticize and then throw off British rule? To which contemporary groups (1852) does Douglass implicitly compare and explicitly contrast these patriots?
- a) What does Douglass think about the principles expressed in the Declaration of Independence?
- What does he mean by "American national inconsistencies"?
- a) On page 189, to whom does Douglass refer when he uses the term "us"?
b) According to Douglass, what was the meaning of the Fourth of July for this group?
- According to Douglass, what is needed to end slavery?
- **Quarles:**
- Quarles talks about the "hate-love attitude" antebellum free blacks held towards the Declaration of Independence.
- On what grounds did antebellum free blacks criticize the Declaration? (The "hate" part of the relationship). Give at least one example of a specific type of criticism (eg. a toast, speech, or pamphlet described by Quarles).
- Antebellum free blacks also referred to the principles in the Declaration of Independence to advocate specific causes of interest to them. (The "love" part of the relationship). What were some of these causes?
- Although antebellum free blacks generally considered the Fourth of July to be a white holiday, why did they celebrate it in 1827? Was this a unanimous celebration? Instead of the Fourth of July, what holidays did free blacks observe to celebrate freedom?

Study Questions for Thanksgiving:

- In Martha Lamb's story, "One New England Thanksgiving," what were the main activities held on Thanksgiving in the nineteenth century that she describes?
- What does Lamb mean when she says that Thanksgiving "can never, in its observance, be to the children of other States and climes just what it was and is to the children of New England"?
- What different activities does Brander Matthews describe as having taken place on Thanksgiving in his short story?
- Why was the Thanksgiving proclamation made by Cardinal Gibbons in 1888 so significant?
- In her 1847 editorial what reason does Hale give for why she thinks it will be important for Thanksgiving to be observed in all the states on the same day?
- With what terms does Hale describe Thanksgiving in her 1848 editorial (what metaphor does she use)?
- Why does Hale associate Thanksgiving with Independence Day? What does she believe they have in common?
- What actions does Hale propose her readers take to see that Thanksgiving is established as an official national holiday?
- Why does Hale mention "sectional feelings" in her 1863 editorial? What was happening in the country that year?